The Workshop.

A Monthly Journal, devoted to Progress of the Useful Arts.

EDITED BY

I. SCHNORR AND OTHERS.

VOL. VI. No. 7.

THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF ORNAMENTATION.

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C. PARTICULAR FORMS OF RADIATION AND DEVELOPMENT

are next to be found in the rays which are developed within the circle. With single and double rays, which can only point out direction, no rythmical position is possible; this can only commence with a threefold radiation, which plays a very important part in ornamentation. In the similarity of the angles and lines round the same germ in quite different positions the eye finds far more pleasure than in the rythmical radiation of four rays, which becomes fatiguing through the monotony of the lines and stiffness of the right angle. But though the triple radiation and the forms developed from it may be more elegant, the quadruple has the advantage of a greater appearance of stability, because of the rectangular position of the lines and the diagonals. The quadruple radiation and its multiples occur especially in flower ornaments, which, for technical reasons, must display right angles, as for example in woven stuffs. In laces, or wherever rosettes are frequently repeated, the diagonal rays play an important part, creating, as they do, new forms, and expressing with great clearness the rythmical connexion and stability of the single motives. By the union of the extreme points, as well as by the strict bisection of the lines, these simple figures give rise to numerous combinations, to which can be applied an endless variety of coloring. The fundamental law, however, still remains in force, that the same rythmical radiation must be preserved throughout.

As in music the trichord, so in plastic art the triple radiation, and especially the grouping in threes has a special charm. The points of the equilateral triangle lie in the periphery of a circle, whose radii meeting the periphery in six points, mark also the angular points of the triangle. In ecclesiastical ornaments this last is surrounded with rays, as the symbol of the Trinity. When two equilateral triangles and two squares are placed transversely on one another, there result the hexagonal and octagonal rosettes, which by their richer proportions are superior to the triangular or quadrilateral ones. In the rosette with twelve or sixteen radiations, it is advisable to allow the principal figure, the hexagonal or octagonal, to be distinctly visible that the sight may not be confused. All unevensided rosettes show a direction of rays opposite to that of the stalk to which they are attached. (v. No. 30.)

The cinquefoil rosette is of most frequent occurrence in nature, which by its junction with the stem gives the direction.

The septagonal radiation shows equally the direction, and, together with that of nine and eleven rays, is only used in rich floral rosettes.

Another important law is that in their simple figures, the triangle, square, circle, spiral etc., the utmost possible clearness and distinctness of form should be preserved, and all that is arbitrary and unsymmetrical excluded. The square, and the equilateral and right angled triangle, as well as the circle, are to be preferred to the parallelogram, the acute angled triangle and the oval, in the absence of any special reason to the contrary. That there

* Continued from page 81 *ante*.

lies in these forms an intrinsic relation to harmony is shown by the geometrical figures of sound, which are more regular in pure than in impure tones.

Accordingly we consider the most important forms to be the radiations of the straight line, of the circumference of the circle and of the centre in geometrical and plane figures. Next to these comes the further development in the feathery parallel radiation, especially in plants, and in the combination of contrasts. We may see in a few instances, how agreeable for example is the alternation of straight and curved lines, of sharp and blunt outlines, of triangle, square and circle, of leaf, bud, stem and berry.

In the double rosette, the development of the interior and exterior rosettes must be particularly observed. The interior must be more strongly marked but less developed than the exterior one. In its coloring also, it must attract the eye more forcibly as the centre of radiation.

The rosettes appear still richer in their organisation by means of bands, flowing lines, foliage, bead ornament etc. The forms that spring out most freely will always be on the circumference, so that the radiation may be shown with the greatest clearness.

Within rosettes of this kind, the circular form appears to be the strictest bond of union, and the determinate line for fresh developments, although they avoid the circle for an exterior figure, as giving too stiff a limit to them.

In general the circle may be considered as the most perfect of all forms; but in regard to ornamentation, as we have already remarked, it expresses only the inclusive, the concrete and the contrast; and the radiating rosette is decidedly preferable to it as a graceful ornament. If we express the sun and moon by the simple circle, as an ornament it is of the most prosaic kind; the radiating crown is absolutely necessary for any poetical impression.* If the radiation is to be upwards, the the nucleus of the rays, on the starting point of the development, (as is seen in many flowers and leaves) is transferred beneath. In this case the central development is generally enlarged and pointed on the upper part (v. No. 49). Plant forms of this kind always show the uneven radiation. The oval shows the evenly prolonged radiation from above and below (v. No. 48).

D. THE POETRY OF LIGHT.

For the ideal signification or symbolism of radiation let us remember that we make use of the words "a countenance radiant with joy and intellect" and that the men and women who are considered by the church to be saints, are represented with a radiating halo. In the New Testament it is written that the face of Christ in the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor did shine as the sun.

Light is the symbol of Knowledge and Truth, and therefore significant of the Deity. According to the gnostic theology God dwells as the Supreme Wisdom in the fulness of Light and is the Source of all good. Darkness on the contrary is death. In every religion the worship of light has found an especial expression, and many ornaments of the Arabian and Persian ornamentation hitherto unexplained find in this their solution*. Transfiguration in light is the climax, the sanctification of the material into the divine, that is, into perfection. Light is the joy-bringing element, for the joy of nature when transformed by the Light of the sun, finds its echo in our own feelings. Sunrise so longed for during the darkness of the night, a sunbeam bursting forth after a long day's rain, is a double joy to the heart. This feeling is universal, and if we refer to it here, it is because we are apt to overlook, by the daily recurrence of the phenomena, the importance of the law of art that lies concealed in the light. Whoever reflects why a colour appears brighter after looking upon one that forms a contrast to it, will soon find a confirmation of the law that the eye ever seeks the totality of colours or their complement in light. Whoever has observed that the eye always turns to the clearer light, just as the eye of a listener is attracted to the eye of a talented speaker, will soon find out the law that the more important objects must be depicted in the brighter colours. When we have to work with elementary means, we must have regard to the elementary impression we receive. Important as is the law of spacefilling, so far as that no space must appear empty, and no object undeveloped and lifeless, we must still take care not to employ rich forms, where they may injure the effect of the simple beauty of the material.

Transfiguration into rays of light is also to our ideas the most beautifully poetical development of our material being, as it is of all material things, for, before we clothe any material with ornament, we seek to render it as bright as possible by cutting, polishing, varnishing etc, and estimate the value of a material according to its capacity for receiving light and colour. Shining objects reflect the light, and consequently appear still more important and richer than they really are. The material which most beautifully shows the intensity of radiation is gold, and hence it is that gilding is so largely applied to all kinds of stuffs which are themselves without glitter, and yet are required to have a rich and costly appearance. If the whole surface is not to be gilt, then only the outlines,

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* The zigzag ornament expresses both the continued movement and the development of a straight or curved line

*) In Saracenic tapestry Lions and Gazelles, Falcons and Eagles frequently occur. The following verses from Eastern poetry may serve for an explanation.

Morning dawn grew clear and bright:
Heart and soul rejoiced once more,
When the coy gazelle, like night
Fled from the morning lion's roar.

Life and action thrilled my breast.
Up I started, firm and bold:
The falcon, with its wings of gold
Hovered o'er its azure nest.

So the lion represents the light, the gazelle the night, the falcon the day. These three animals occur in numberless variations in the Saracenic stuffs of the middle ages, and the most learned archæologists have tried to unfold their meaning.

and those significant ornaments which ought to stand out separate and shining are so treated. A white outline on a dark ground has the same signification, whereas the dark outline is only used to separate striking contrasts of colour, as for example, on a gilt ground where the outline cannot be more strongly raised. That the mixture of colour-contrasts where they meet, is to our eyes more harmonious with a black, white or gold outline, we can here only remark by the way. Of course in those materials in which the colours and their homogeneous distribution are of the greatest importance, as in carpets, the above law finds its strictest expression. The east offers us many examples, of which we may almost say, that they are rythmically disposed colour-dabs. The brighter the colour the more it is suited to the rosette form. The rosettes are often connected by tendrils and band ornaments, in consequence of the contrast they exhibit, and the effect of the pattern is heightened by them.

E. THE ÆSTHETICS OF PLANT-ORNAMENTS.

With regard to the pleasing impression which is produced by plant forms, we would make the observation, that this is owing to our perception of the primitive and continued efforts to counteract the force of the gravitation of matter, and of the expansion towards the upper part. Moreover, plants, in their development, show the different stages of germinating, growing, budding, flowering, and fading, which correspond congenially in their changes to the joyful and sorrowful feelings of our own souls. Without any other law than that of general harmonious development they adapt themselves submissively to the rule of nature of which they are the most beautiful ornament. Schlegel calls plants the most moral as well as the most beautiful forms in nature, and thinks that man in his truly happy moments, in his purely involuntary vegetation, resembles more closely the plants. At all events, we cannot but recognise the magic of the vegetable world, since it affords us the most graceful poetical motives for ornamentation, while it adapts itself involuntarily to the laws of direction, grouping, supporting etc. The pleasing insertion of child figures, (cupids, cherubs etc.) shows how advantageously those objects may be introduced whose enjoyments are more involuntary than our own, and who in innocence and peace stand far apart from the battle of life ("of such is the kingdom of Heaven") Altogether objectionable is the employment of motives which represent the contrasts to development, namely fading, withering, death and corruption; faded flowers and leaves for example, skeletons, sculls etc., as well as the representation of the gradations of physical suffering. What is allowable, on account of the grand ideas connected with it, in the animated or dramatic representations of high art, as for instance, the crucifixion of Christ, is not to be permitted in ornamentation pure and simple. Even in high art itself the expression of mental agony must ennoble physical suffering, which has always something repugnant in a purely pathological representation. The symbols of the ornamentation must also be always simple, agreeable, and generally easy to be understood. The development in any particular direction finds an especially beautiful expression in the spiral tendril which springs forth again in fresh spirals from the parent stem. This kind of development shows the highest degree of movement, which is still more increased by the addition of arabesques, of foliage and flowers, among which are distributed swiftly moving animals (squirrels, lizards, serpents, panthers, stags etc.) as for example in the ascending tendrils of Raphael's decorations in the Vatican, or in a horizontal frieze in Pompeii.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

The charm of the impression which an object produces upon us consists unquestionably in the fact that our imagination unites itself, as it were, by means of sight, with the object itself, so that, as far as it is possible to our humanity and individuality, we identify ourselves with it, rejoice, suffer and act with it. In this respect plastic art produces its effect first through the senses and then through the imagination. For example, we are affected disagreeably by any evidently incorrect proportion, by which a weighty ornament appears too heavy for what supports it. Still more distinctly we feel the want of freedom, in disease and mutilation, and any obstacle to the natural right to develop innate power has always a painful effect, and we must therefore describe freedom as an essential attribute of beauty. As in literature, the best style is the least tedious, so in ornamentation the best displays itself in the choice and representation of forms which affect us most agreeably, those that are suited, that is, logically to the purpose, the material and construction, and at the same time appeal poetically to our sensibilities. We have already pointed out our innate longing, the impulse of involuntary nature to seek refreshment after the efforts which too great excitement always causes us. The beneficent influence of ornaments which have their origin in this involuntary and natural desire of rest, thus shows their motive, as well as the signification of their artistic configurations in radiating development, as the foundation of the whole system of organisation. I trust I have succeeded in more clearly explaining this fundamental law. If art is not merely an abstract science, but as Heine expresses it "fair knowledge, graceful power" and if the power consists, above all else, in the strength of the feelings and the capacity to give expression to that strength, we need nevertheless a sound judgement, and some clue to conduct us safely through the labyrinth of the ornamental forms which crowd upon us in our present time. Many originally plastic ornaments, for example, have become painted surface decorations in which the colour has in many ways influenced the form. If we further remark how the colored ornaments which have come to us from the gorgeous east, have always powerfully stirred up our northern art, but afterwards have become pale, as if seen through a mist, and been

replaced by plastic and constructive forms, still I must be permitted to attribute the highest value to the influence of colour, and have therefore endeavoured to enunciate laws which, properly speaking, are not addresed to the understanding but are instinctively felt. By these laws the Arabians were guided when, by a judicious restraint in the choice of motives, they produced those splendid decorations of their Alhambra and other buildings where we meet with forms which elude the interpretation of archæologists, being as they are in colour and form a metamorphosed music, which only finds an exact expression in the poetry of this tenderhearted philosophical people.

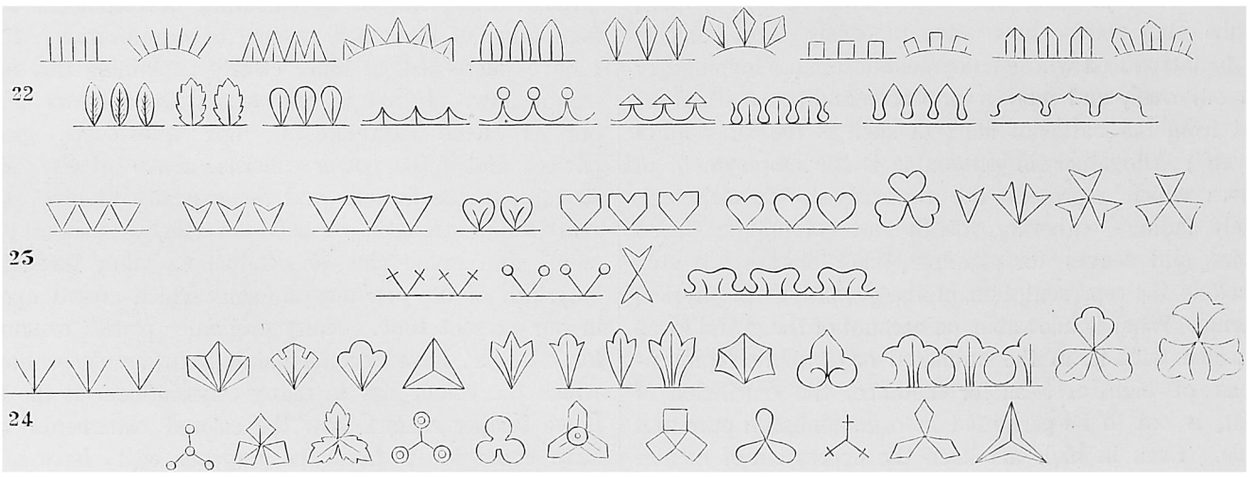
> "It seems as though the artist's palette were
> The glorious sun itself, in which he dipped
> His pencil, else such glowing colours
> Had not decked this mansion."

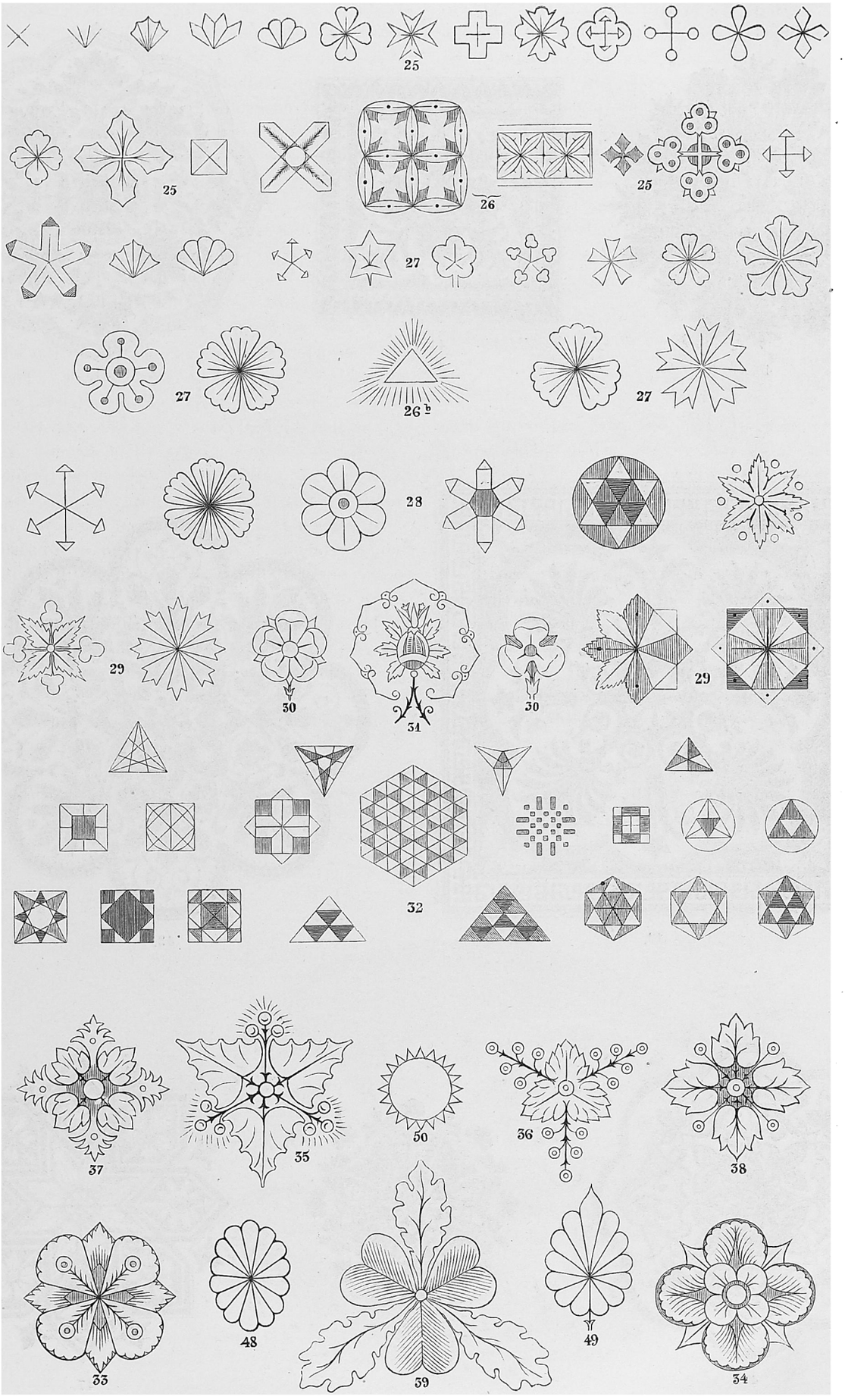
We may well wish to our own and future times this cheerfulness of color, from which alone spring such symphonies of colour as are known in the east, and by which we step forth, as it were, from the bleak grey misty winter into a bright and gladsome spring.

What influence civilisation, and the increasingly felt desire to give more light to the interiors of churches and dwellinghouses, what importance the application of glass and its transparency and cheapness, has had in the progress of architecture, and together with it in ornamentation has not yet been sufficiently appreciated. Space in itself, the material which encloses it, and the lighting of the space, have in different epochs of style come more or less to the foreground. Whether the light should come through a door and through a hole in the roof as at Pompeii, or whether, as in gothic structures, the walls should be as far as possible suppressed and replaced by pillars, and the intervals filled up with pictures or carpetlike painting on glass, this must first be considered by those who, without regard to new discoveries and new necessities of civilisation, prefer a slavish imitation of the style of an earlier epoch.

Painted glass, silk and enamel, and the moderate price of gilding have, as new and prized materials, exercised at times a great influence. The reflexion and transparency of colors immediately enhance in our eyes the value of the object which possesses those qualities. What a lively appearance have marble and silk when contrasted with stucco and cotton. To the overwhelming and selfdenying intellectual labor of our times the large clear panes of white glass are as suitable as the whitewashed walls for the offices of the Bureaucracy. The desire of cheerful colours is however unextinguishable, and we have in a degree released ourselves, within the last ten years, from the monotony and discord of colours. After a long night, light is now dawning over every branch of art-industry. May light and colour also, the most impalpable elements of ornamentation, be better appreciated than heretofore. If we are deficient in sensibility, let us be the more studious. We must first of all observe the source of light, and its divisibility into single colours, then the object which receives the light, partly absorbing it and partly reflecting it, and lastly our own sight and its nervous activity.

The eye in a healthy state always seeks the complement of all colours, and can only thus become sensible of the harmony of contrasts. It always turns involuntarily to the brightest spot and the strongest contrast: In these two laws lies the key to all colouring.

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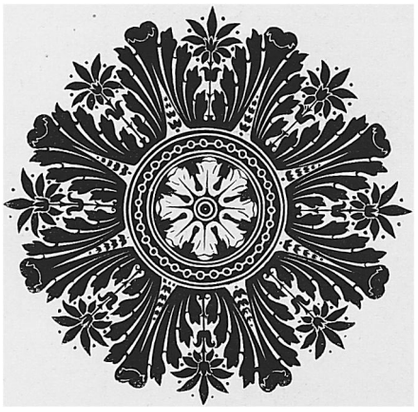

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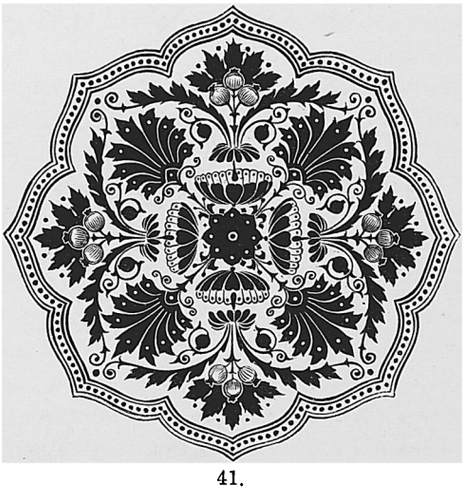

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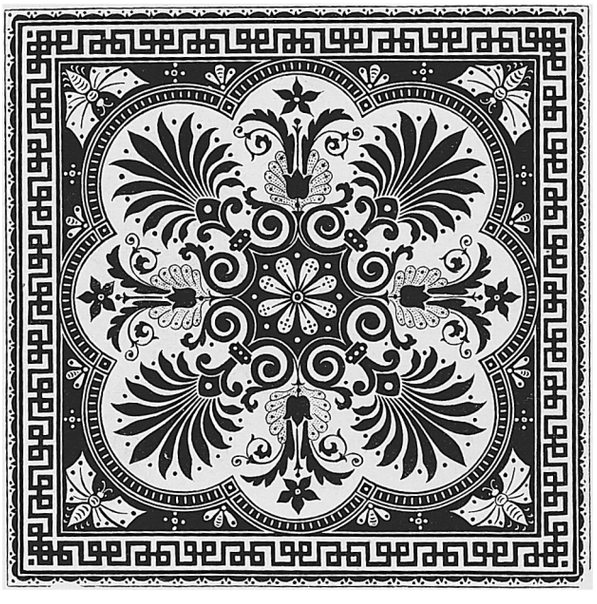

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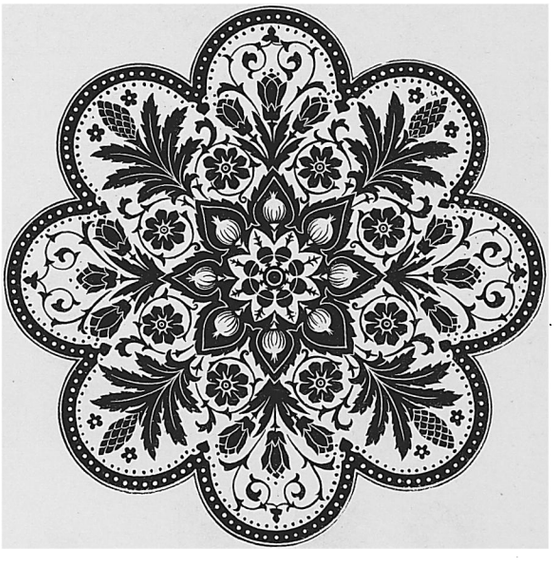

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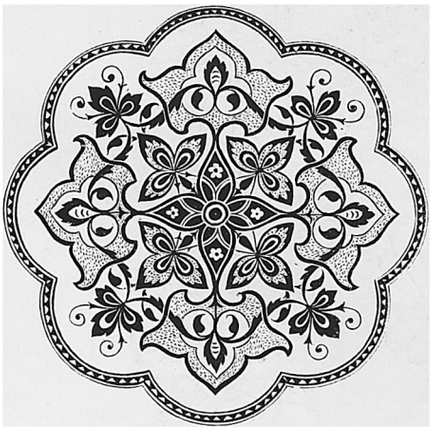

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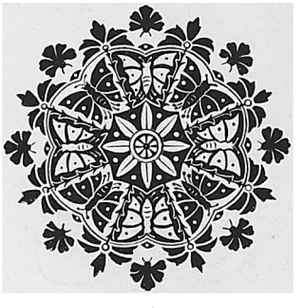

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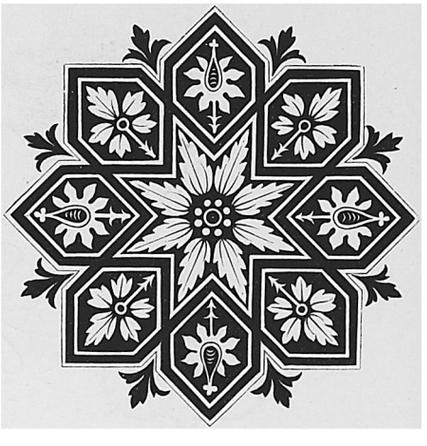

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